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Footlights Of Broadway

Market For Writing Talent Booms On 'White Way', TV

By WARD MOREHOUSE

NEW YORK—Rouben Mamoulian, the man of the theater who staged such notable dramatic plays as "Porgy" and "Wings Over Europe" and such world-famous musical plays as "Oklahoma!" and "Carousel", has these words for young American playwrights:

"There are two things to be remembered. It is really difficult to get a play produced, but it's one of the easiest things in the world for a new writer to get his play read—and read quickly. I read from three to four plays a week and I'm always eager to get a new script. I'm forever looking for one without a fatal flaw and that's the kind of a play I'll try to buy immediately.

"There has never really been such a market for writing talent in the United States as there is today. Television is an insatiable monster in so far as material is concerned. TV buys and buys. I have the feeling that out of a country of 165 million people we ought to get a lot of new young writers for the stage and, perhaps, we're now on the verge of a renaissance.

"I do hope that all of the young people of America who have a genuine yearning for the theater will begin trying to write for it. Perhaps we're about due for another such decade as the 1920s, which brought forth a swarm of fine writers in the wake of the great Eugene O'Neill."

It was Mr. Mamoulian, as you may know, who staged O'Neill's "Marco Millions". He is now in New York looking for and reading scripts. He is also here in connection with the film he is to make of the Bizet opera, "Carmen".

"We're planning to make most of the picture in Spain next Summer," he said. 'Maxwell Anderson and I have collaborated on a new English version. We've freshened up the story and have added a number of dialogue scenes. The Bizet score remains inviolate in its essence. We'll do the shooting in Spain because we want the picture to have as much of the authentic background as possible.

"Our 'Carmen' will be sung entirely in English and will be done with an English and American cast. Later we'll turn to 'The Barber of Seville' and will try the same method. There are many candidates for the role of Carmen. What we're trying to do is to find a young Carmen, an actress and a singer.

"Ever since I came to this country in the mid-'twenties (Mr. Mamoulian was born in Tiflis) I've wondered about the possibilities of an intimate opera house in English. The public loves music but the classical operas are a foreign and exotic thing to most people. The greatest thing that has happened in recent years in the Broadway theater has been the development of the musical play."

"Anastasia," a play by Marcelle Maurette, adapted into English by Guy Bolton, a diligent worker in the theater ever since the glorious days of Bolton, Wodehouse & Kern, is a tangled and diffuse melodramatic comedy which has been installed at the Lyceum. It offers some lively scenes here and there, but it never quite fulfills the promise of its first act.

"Anastasia" is a dramatization of the legend of Anna Anderson, still living in Germany, who claims to be the youngest daughter of the late Czar of Russia.

Viveca Lindfors is regal and beautiful in her performance as Anna. She has spirit and majesty and royal bearing. Eugenie Leontovitch brings genuine authority to her play as the Dowager Empress. Joseph Anthony, suave and crafty and full of menace as the imposter who knows all the tricks, reveals old-time stock - company villainy in the right proportion of his playing as the head of the syndicate. There are amusing performances from David J. Stewart, Boris Tumarin and Hurd Hatfield.

"Anastasia" is a somewhat old-fashioned play, but one that offers a lot that is theatrically effective. Its principal trouble is a weak third act.

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